Part One is the framework. Ethical subjectivity emerges out of impersonal mere being when an “I” responds to the Other’s call. Nealon[[1]](#footnote-1): “For Levinas, on the other hand, **if one is to be an ethical subject, one must escape the** dark**, anonymous rumbling of** Being; in order for there to be a subjectivity responsive to the other, there must be a hypostasis that lifts the subject out of its wallowing in the **Solipsistic** raw **Materiality** of the*il y a*. **Out of** the “there is” of **anonymous being, there must rise a “*Here I Am*.”**[*me voici*] that nonetheless retains the trace of the hesitation and debt -- what Levinas will call the "passivity" -- characteristic of the*il y a*'s impossibility. As he writes, hypostasis is subject-production, the introduction of space or place into the anonymous murmur of being: "to be conscious is to be torn away from the there is" (E&E, p. 60/98). **Subjectivity is torn away from [impersonal being]** the anonymity of the there is **by a responding to the other that is not reducible to a**ny simple **rule-governed** or universalizing **code**; **the ethical subject is**, in other words, **a responding, site-specific** performative that is irreducible to an ontological or transhistorical substantive. As Levinas writes, “the body is the very advent of consciousness. It is nowise a thing -- not only because a soul inhabits it, but because its being belongs to the order of events and not to that of substantives. It is not posited; it is a position. It is not situated in space given beforehand; it is the irruption in anonymous being of localization itself. . . . The body as subjectivity does not express an event; it is itself this **Event**. (*E&E*, pp. 71,72/122,124)” This is perhaps the most concise statement of Levinas's understanding of a subjectivity that rises out of the*il y a*through hypostasis: the subject comes about through a performative response to the call of the other, through the bodily taking up of a "position," "the irruption in anonymous being of localization itself." However, this hypostasis is not the intentional act of a subject; it is, rather, subjection in and through the face-to-face encounter with the other person. As Levinas writes, "the localization of consciousness is not subjective; it is the subjectivization of the subject" (*E&E*, p. 69/118). Thus, "here I am" rises out of the there is as an accusative, where I am the object rather than the subject of the statement, where I am responding to a call from the face of the other. As Jan de Greef writes, "for Levinas **the movement of subjectivity does not go from me to the other but from the other to me** . . . .**“Here I Am”** (*me voici*) --the unconditional of the hostage -- **can only be said in response to an 'appeal'** or a 'preliminary citation.'Convocation precedes invocation."[16](http://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxy.baylor.edu/journals/postmodern_culture/v006/6.1nealon.html" \l "foot16) It is to-the-other that one responds in the hypostasis that lifts the subject out of the*il y a*the face of the other, and its call for response-as-subjection, is the only thing that can break the subject's imprisonment in the anonymous*il y a*and open the space of continuing response to alterity. As Levinas sums up the project of his*Existence and Existents*, "it sets out to approach the idea of Being in general in its impersonality so as to then be able to analyze the notion of the present and of position, in which a being,a subject, an existent, arises in impersonal Being, through ahypostasis" (p. 19/18). As the evasion of the "impersonal being" that is the*il y a*hypostasis (as the concrete performative response to the face or voice of the other person) is the birth of the ethical Levinasian subject. Such a **[so] subjection to the other** [which] makes orproduces a subject at the same time that it **unmakes any chance for the subject to remain** an **alienated or free** monad**.** As Levinas writes, "**The subject is inseparable from this appeal** or this election, **which cannot be declined"** (*OTB*, p. 53/68), so the subject cannot be thematized in terms of alienation from some prior state of wholeness; in Levinasian subjectivity, there is an originary interpellating appeal of expropriation, not an originary loss of the ability to appropriate.

Thus, the Other interrupts the Ego’s enjoyment and makes it an ethical subject by calling into question the Ego’s notion of itself as an “I”. Lyotard[[2]](#footnote-2): “**The violence of the revelation is** in **the ego’s expulsion from the addressor instance**, from which it managed its work **of enjoyment,** power, and cognition**. It is the scandal of an *I* displaced onto the *you* instance. By turning the I into its you, the other** makes him or herself master, and **turns the I into his or her hostage.”** So, contrary to western tradition ethical subjects are fundamentally heteronomous, not autonomous. And, the vulnerable face of the Other poses a pre-reflective ethical dilemma: I recognize my ability to do violence to the Other, but because I am free-willed, I also recognize the possibility of forming a good will towards the other. Burggraeve[[3]](#footnote-3) 1: “**The confrontation with the appeal of the naked and vulnerable face awakens in the [subject]** *conatus* the scruple over itself through which the being of the I reveals itself as also otherwise than being. As paradoxical as it may sound, this otherwise than being is not introduced by the face but in fact is manifested as essentially belonging to the dynamic of the *conatus*. The scruple over itself that operates from inside out within the conatus means precisely the good will as an ethical event. As orientation to the good, the good will is not a “natural necessity” nor is it the effort of existing, in the sense that a person can do nothing other than choose either for the other or for self-interest. **the good will** enacts itself precisely as a scruple, as placing in question, **as a discomfort with** itself in **the effort of existing.** As *conatus essendi*, I am uneasy about my own conatus essendi; I realize that **the evidence of my striving to exist is not at all evident**, that I might not outlive my self-interest after all. In the exercise of my effort of existing it occurs to methat, **left to itself, that effort is brutal and leaves everything behind it in its own wake.** **There is** also **a** certain **“natural impulse** or inclination” **in the** conatus **[subject] to think and act from its own interest**, though **[but] this** still **does not mean** that **it is** abandoned to itself as an **inevitable** mechanism of natural necessity. **It is because it can be marked by an internal scruple** **or reserve** about itself **that the** *conatus* **[subject] is ethical** and by this it exceeds nature-nature being understood here as moderated or exercised in accord with natural law. And through the crisis that it bears within itself it is not abandoned to itself as fatality, but can exceed itself to the other than itself. **Through the internal scruple a choice is put before it between self-interest and the otherwise than being by which it exceeds itself as “involvement with the good,” and is thus “good will.”** In short **the paradox of being human is that** as the effort of existing **we are not abandoned to our nature as to a natural impulse, but, through the scruple**, through our conscience as bad conscience, **we can arise above ourselves to choose** for the good, that is to say **for “unselfishness.”** Thus, ethics is the fundamental human experience, and is grounded in permanent responsibility for the other. And, it is precisely this infinite responsibility which creates the conditions for ethical decision-making; any finite conception of ethics is not ethical at all. Derrida[[4]](#footnote-4): “I believe that we cannot give up on the concept of infinite responsibility, as Rorty seemed to do in his remarks, when he spoke of Levinas as a blind spot in my work. I would say, for Levinas and for myself, that if you give up the infinitude of responsibility, there is no responsibility. It is because we act and we live in infinitude that the responsibility with regard to the other is irreducible. **If responsibility was not infinite, if every** time that I have to take an **ethical or political decision with regard to the other** this **was not infinite, then I would not be able to engage myself in an infinite debt with regard to each singularity.** I owe myself infinitely to each and every singularity. **If responsibility was not infinite, you could not have moral and political problems. There are only moral and political problems,** and everything that follows from this, **from the moment when responsibility is not limitable.”** Moreover, conceiving of subjectivity as self-oriented makes true ethical decisions impossible; subjectivity must consist solely in doing justice to the Other. Sokoloff[[5]](#footnote-5): “Decisions are usually viewed as the prerogative of the subject. Through anxiety, Derrida deepens the crisis of decision by emptying out its meaning which forces the death of the subject. He undermines the assumption that subjects actually decide. **If your identity is fixed, then your decision is only the repetition and extension of your identity**. It isnot really a decision.If your identity is grounded on the hatred or love of a particular category of people, then **this eradicates the indeterminacy that is the foundation for decision.** Decision grounded on the maintenance of identity, then, negates decision. Subjects certain of their identity do not decide. In fact, decision Derrida: The decision, if there is such a thing, must neutralize if not render impossible in advance the who and the what. If one knows, andif it is a subject that knows who and what, then the decision is simply the application of a law. In other words, if there is a decision, it presupposes that the subject of the decision does not yet exist and neither does the object. Thus with regard to the subject and the object, there will never be a decision. (Derrida 1996: 84.)For him, the invention ofthedecision is simultaneously the invention of a new subjectwho is then re-invented by the next decision that splits apart the subject in the ensuing decision. All decisions immediately alter the subject. **The sovereign subject cannot make a decision because its need for identity prevents it from responding to the other in ways that may necessitate its own transformation.** The subject with a fixed identity never really decides. For this reason, decision "must surprise . . . the very subjectivity of the subject" (Derrida 1997: 68). In the act of decision, we must not know who we are or how we are going to decide: "Decision is unconscious-insane as that may seem, it involves the unconscious and nevertheless remains responsible" (69). In order for decision to be possible, the purposive subject must be replaced by one capable of suspending, conserving, and affirming legality and itself in a non-programmatic way. For Derrida, only such a subject is capable of deciding. The issue here is not the lack of the subject for decision making but the type of subject capable of deciding. Derrida conceives decision in a way that necessitates the interruption of the subject. An interrupted subject is not the negation of the subject but one newly conceived. That is to say, **the subject who decides must be oriented to doing justice to the other as opposed to maintaining its self-identity.”** Finally, since deducing moral principles from other moral principles is infinitely regressive, prefer a Levinasian account since it acknowledges morality is non-deducible and treats ethics as first philosophy; ethics is not grounded in a totalizing, rule bound Code, but emerges prior to reason when the pre-reflective, egoistic self encounters radical Alterity.

Part Two is the offense. I contend that killing an abuser is incompatible with the NC’s ethic. First, killing another person is impermissible because murder permanently excludes the other from ethical consideration. Murder denies that one can relate with the other, and thus destroys the possibility of ethics at all. Burggraeve[[6]](#footnote-6) 2: “**Murder** manifests itself not so much as a fact taking place once and for all, but a**[i]s** a passion **driven by [an]** a well-determined **intention**ality-namely **to destroy the other totally.** The denial occurring in the consumption and use of others still remains partial. In the grasp that I exert on them, I do indeed contest their independence but I still preserve their existence in reality so that they are and continue to be “for me.” **Killing** is radical: One does not dominate (appropriate, use, and consume) the other, but clears him out of the way, or destroys him; the other is driven even from existing. Murder, then, **renounces absolutely all “comprehension” of the other, for one** no longer **wishes** to include the other in the “same,” that is, in one’s own project of existing, but, on the contrary **to exclude him, because he is “too much” in the way of one’s struggle for identity.**

Second, it is impossible to determine the identity of the other with certainty, and doing so would be an unethical, totalizing act. Beavers[[7]](#footnote-7): “**Anytime I take the person in my idea to be the real person, I have closed off contact with the real person; I have cut off the connection with the other that is necessary if ethics is to refer to real** other **people.** This is a central violence to the other that denies the other his/her own autonomy. Levinas calls this violence "*totalization*" and it occurs whenever I limit the other to a set of rational categories, be they racial, sexual, or otherwise. Indeed, it occurs whenever I already know what the other is about before the other has spoken.Totalization is a denial of the other's difference,the denial of the otherness of the other. That is, it is the inscription of the other in the same. **If ethics presupposes the real other person, then such totalization** will, in itself, be **[is] unethical.”** Thus, victims cannot kill their abusers because the act of murder forecloses upon the possibility of real knowledge of the abuser, and permanently destroys the possibility of the abuser’s repentance.

Third, non-violence is the conclusion of an ethic that rejects the primacy of autonomous freedom. Self-defense isn’t morally permissible if it necessitates the evil of violence because individual rights are meaningless; there are no discrete individuals, only persons contingent upon their exposure to radical alterity. Jordaan[[8]](#footnote-8): However, **behind the** apparentagreement **[claim] that there ought to be a limit to what others may demand of the subject lies the assumed centrality** of the subject, **a subject that is** either **equal to others**, or superior in the sense that the equality of the other to the subject has to be demonstrated/granted. Moreover, the ‘controversial’ character of positive duties which constitute the most extreme form of responsibility for others demanded in traditional political philosophy further suggests that the autonomy of the self is assumed to be foremost, when weighed against the needs of others. In order to bring to light the significance of this fencing off of some sphere of autonomy/non-responsibility for the subject, it is necessary to briefly recall the contention that the subject finds himself simultaneously in an ethical and a political relation with the other, an issue that was also touched upon in section 1.1 and which will be discussed more fully in chapter 3. **[However]** In the interpersonal ethical relation between the subject and the other, **the subject finds his freedom and his ‘right to be’ put in question by the face of the other. The subject’s right to be is restored by assuming an infinite responsibility for the other**, a burden from which he is given partial respite with the appearance of a ‘third’ next to the other. The presence of the third, who is also an other, requires that the self not focus his attention on a single other, but that he restricts his responsibility for a single other so as to divide his efforts among numerous others. The presence of the third marks the beginning of justice and equality which includes the subject, as well as of institutions through which the subjects responsibility towards others that he will never meet can be realized. Importantly, equality here also refers to a line that establishes the end of our responsibility for others and the beginning of our freedom (from responsibility for others). Butsince every person is both a unique other for whom I am infinitely responsible and a general other with whom I stand in a relation of equal and reciprocal responsibility, **the subjects sphere of autonomy cannot be regarded as fully sealed off from responsibility for the other.**

Thus negate. As an underview, presume neg because:

1. Statements are false until proven true as per social convention: both the scientific and philosophical communities concur that if I assert that unicorns are true, I have to actively prove my claim.
2. There are more ways to prove a statement false than to prove it true because proving the content of the statement false *or* proving that any of the terms in the statement don’t exist render it untrue.
3. Human beings share a general intuition that it is wrong to kill innocent people, so negate to hedge against the possibility that affirming creates conditions whereby a victim unjustly kills their abuser.

And prefer logical warrants for presumption to theoretical warrants because while it is always possible to compensate for fairness deficits in another manner, refusing to vote on logical presumption arguments sets the dangerous precedent that uncovering truth isn’t an important aspect of this educational activity.

**Framework extensions:**

Extend **Nealon**: Ethical subjectivity emerges out of egoistic mere being via a response to the call of the Other that is unique and site-specific. “Here I am” can only be said in response to the Other’s appeal.

Extend **Lyotard:** The Other interrupts the Ego’s enjoyment and calls it to ethical subjectivity by displacing the self as an “I” onto the instance of the self as “you.” Upon exposure to Alterity the self recognizes it can no longer act for itself; the Other calls into question the I’s place under the sun. The ethical self is fundamentally heteronomous, *not* *autonomous*.

Extend **Burggraeve**: The vulnerable face of the Other poses a pre-reflective ethical dilemma: I recognize my ability to do violence to the Other, but because I am free-willed, I also recognize the possibility of forming a good will towards the other.

Extend **Derrida:** Only ethics as infinite responsibility creates the conditions for ethical decisionmaking because if decisions concerned finite obligations then there would be no conflicts over which obligations to pursue.

Extend **Sokoloff**: Subjectivity cannot be self-oriented because then it would consist in the reinforcement of one’s own identity in a manner incompatible with the undecidability of an ethical decision. The subject who decides must be oriented towards doing justice to the other as opposed to maintaining self-identity.

**Contention Extensions:**

Extend **Burggraeve 2**: Killing another person is impermissible because murder permanently excludes the other from ethical consideration. Murder renounces absolutely all comprehension of the other and thus destroys the possibility of ethics at all.

Extend **Beavers**: Attempting to codify or understand an Other’s identity is a totalizing unethical act because it denies the Other’s real uniqueness. Thus, victims cannot kill their abusers because the act of murder forecloses upon the possibility of real knowledge of the abuser, and permanently destroys the possibility of the abuser’s repentance.

Extend **Jordaan:** Non-violence is the conclusion of an ethic that rejects the primacy of autonomous freedom. Self-defense isn’t morally permissible if it necessitates the evil of violence because individual rights are meaningless; there are no discrete individuals, only persons contingent upon their exposure to radical alterity.

**AT-NC is a NIB**

Zizek’s article “Smashing the Neighbor’s Face” is literally all about how understanding the other’s otherness requires that we violently “deface” them. Number one and two in my Levinas block are these arguments.

Also Hagglund’s argument about how true hospitality requires discriminating between others would turn the NC for example.

**AT-Smash the Other’s Face**

My ethic isn’t an ethic of respecting alterity, it is an ethic of assuming responsibility towards alterity. Responsibility towards the other would persist regardless of whether or not the other has a face like mine. The Other is just the not-I, or the Other person.

**AT-Recognition of Other is just Recognition of Same**

Not true. Ethical subjectivity can only arise from the *call* of another. Recognition has nothing to do with it because ethics is pre-reflective. Moreover, even if we recognize the similarity that all human beings are rational that doesn’t discount that each human person is unique and other. And, if ethics just consists in the recognition of the same then there is nothing to be ethical about; there is no reason to interrupt the ego’s self enjoyment absent an encounter with the radical not-I.

**AT-Hospitality can’t be indifferent**

Responsibility can’t be towards a totalized, essentialized other. We can’t determine responsibility after conceptualizing the other’s identity because we can never fully understand the other. We can only conceive of responsibility for the other as other.

**AT-Justice requires mediating obligations between infinite number of Others**

The resolution is a question of ethics not justice. Ethics must inform and guide justice, but they don’t have to be synonymous. Moreover, this argument concedes that obligations to love the other exist in the first place.

**AT-This is Utopian**

The resolution is a question of ethics not justice. Whether ethics is applicable to the real world is irrelevant. They commit the naturalistic fallacy.

**AT-Loving some means hating others**

This is a problem in terms of implementation and concedes that we do have an obligation to love other people, which means you negate.

**AT-Justifies Suicide**

Suicide isn’t acceptable as per the NC’s ethic because it destroys the individuals capacity to be responsible for the other. Suicide is fundamentally *selfish*, that is, it presumes that we can know with certainty the good of the other. Moreover, this isn’t relevant to the resolution.

**AT-Naturalistic Fallacy**

The moral “ought” or obligation arises from my responsibility to the other. My ethic is fundamentally prescriptive because it demands responsibility of individuals.

**AT-Overdemandingness**

Permanent and complete responsibility is constitutive of ethics, not unethical. Moreover, moral subjects are heteronomous, not autonomous, so privileging the good of the individual is nonsensical.

**AT-Skepticism**

Skep doesn’t interact with the NC. While their arguments might conceivably take out traditional moral realism, they won’t take out Levinas because my framework operates prior to rationality. Ethical responsibility arises from the interaction of the I with the Other whereby the individual subject emerges. Thus, questioning the existence of moral obligation is irrelevant because it occurs after rational reflection, and concedes that ethical subjects are defined by responsibility towards the Other in the first place.

**AT-Egoism**

My ethic holds that beings are egoistic to the extent that they are *not* ethical subjects, but the Other’s call forces the subject to stop and reconsider. Egoistic people are just instances of mere being. Human Beings only emerge from the chaos of egoism to the extent that they become responsible for the Other. Thus, human beings are not egoistic.

1. Nealon, Jeffrey T. “Junk and the Other: Burroughs and Levinas on Drugs.” *Postmodern Culture,* 1995 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Jean Francois Lyotard: “The Differend: Phrases in Dispute.” 1988. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Burggraeve, Roger. “Violence and the Vulnerable Face of the Other: The Vision of Emmanuel Levinas on Moral Evil and Our Responsibility.” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Metaphysics in the Dark: A response to Richard Rorty and Ernesto Laclau. Simon Critchley, 1998. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Sokoloff, William W. “Between Justice and Legality: Derrida on Decision.” 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Burggraeve, Roger. “Violence and the Vulnerable Face of the Other: The Vision of Emmanuel Levinas on Moral Evil and Our Responsibility.” [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Beavers, Anthony. "Introducing Levinas to Undergraduate Philosophers." 1990 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Jordaan, Eduard. “Responsibility, indifference and global poverty: a Levinasian perspective.” 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)